

ADMINISTRATOR

USAID/General Notice  
EGAT/WID  
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E X E C U T I V E   M E S S A G E

Subject: International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

Violence against women is an epidemic that poses a significant barrier to development in human and economic terms around the world. The varied forms of violence against women hold back millions of women and their families from achieving their full potential. Today, as we commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, let us all at USAID renew our commitment to ending violence against women wherever it exists.

Whatever form it takes, the consequences of violence against women go beyond the short term. Not only is it a deplorable abuse of human rights, but it can lead to the disintegration of families, ostracism of the victims, the spread of HIV, economic losses and a legacy of violence and abuse passed on to the next generation. On her tour of Africa this summer, First Lady Laura Bush noted the devastating impact violence has on the global community, "Violence against women is an outrage that afflicts every society. Women who've suffered from violence feel vulnerable and afraid. And violent acts deny our basic rights to safety and security." For more than three decades, USAID has sought to empower women to be full and equal partners in the development of their countries. As a part of this effort, USAID has long supported the fight against violence perpetrated on women and girls. As a result of our commitment to ending the cycle of violence, USAID is now working in partnership with the Departments of State and Justice on the Presidential Initiative on Women's Empowerment and Justice to address this issue. This Presidential Initiative will devote \$55 million over the next three years to raising public awareness about violence against women and improving the judicial and social service systems to meet the needs of women across the African continent.

This effort, requiring the attention of men and women everywhere, is not only a specialized program area of emphasis. It is fundamental to our international development goals. Improving the status of women, enhancing their opportunities and increasing their decision-making capabilities are all part of the solution to ending the plague of violence against women. Today, let us all reaffirm our deep commitment to a more prosperous, healthy and democratic world free of violence.

Andrew S. Natsios

Point of Contact: Any questions concerning this Notice may be directed to Katherine Blakeslee, EGAT/WID, (202) 712-0570.